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ABSTRACT

The development of a sound theory of the arguing of policy questions in debate requires that the Affirmative be obligated to demonstrate the solvency of its plan, regardless of the paradigmatic origins of the case theory. While the specific degree of demonstration which is necessary to establish solvency remains a substantive issue within the context of a given round, the basis of such an obligation remains constant. The advocate of change in a proposition of policy has the responsibility to demonstrate that the effects claimed from the proposition are correlated to specific mechanisms within the plan. The prediction of alleged effects is a burden of affirmation, and need not follow from the failure of negation. Ultimately, the adequacy of a proposition is not measured in terms of the effects claimed, but rather through the probability of the effects' occurrence; an explicit obligation exists on the part of the Affirmative to prove that the plan does in fact remedy the problem. The theoretical requirement for an advocate to predict the consequences of a proposition is best measured in practice by the correspondence between inherency dysfunctions which preclude status quo action with plan mechanisms which address these dysfunctions. (DF)

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PREDICTION OF SOLVENCY IN AFFIRMATIVE PLANS:

The Burden of Policy Advocates

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New departures in the practice of debate along with new theoretic positions of the purpose and function of debate make it difficult to assess exactly what standards should be used to evaluate a debate. Prof. Jack Parker captured this sense of confusion in a recent commentary on the state of debate entitled, "How to Play a Game Which Has No Rules."[1]

The concern of the article was directed less toward the amount or type of departures in theory or practice, as much as to the failure of the advocate to develop a cogent rationale for the acceptance or rejection of a proposal. Prof. Parker's conclusion was not to proscribe a particular theory or argument, "but rather to suggest that developing a sound theory of arguing policy questions is the best way to play the game."[2] This admonition has implications to both the practitioner as well as the teacher of debate. To the debater is suggested a responsibility for presenting a sound position in the debate. To the teacher of debate is suggested a responsibility for educating a debater to distinguish between sound arguments and spurious ones.

It is to this end that this paper addresses itself; albeit, in a small way. This paper attempts to place the Affirmative's obligation to demonstrate the "solvency" of its plan into perspective. It is contended that, regardless of the paradigmatic origins of the case theory, the Affirmative has an obligation to demonstrate its claim. While the specific degree of demonstration which is necessary to allege "solvency" remains a substantive issue within the context of a given round, the basis for such an Affirmative obligation remains constant.

The advocate of change in a proposition of policy has the responsibility to demonstrate that the effects claimed from the proposition are correlated to specific mechanisms within the plan. The prediction of alleged effects is a burden of affirmation, and need not follow from the failure of negation. Ultimately, the adequacy of a proposition is not measured in terms of the effects claimed, but rather through the probability of the effects' occurrence.

Two separate--although related--isses underlie a discussion of an Affirmative responsibility to demonstrate its plan's solvency. The first issue is whether the Affirmative has, in fact, a responsibility to forecast the consequences of the proposed change. Through an analysis of a stock issues perspective, a policy systems perspective, and an hypothesis-tester perspective this paper will contend that an obligation of the Affirmative to predict the solvency of its plan does exist.[3]

The second issue is contingent upon the first and asks at what level of demonstration does the alleged solvency become adequate. How much proof is required for an Affirmative to "reasonably" establish the likelihood that its plan will achieve its claimed effect(s)? This second issue becomes a substantive one and is addressed within the context of the specific issues in a round. An analysis of this responsibility will be addressed from the perspective of prediction requirements as it relates to levels of inherency.

Returning to the focus of the first issue--whether the Affirmative has a responsibility to forecast--it appears that each of the three perspectives under consideration provides a rationale for an obligation to

demonstrate solvency. The first of these perspectives traces its justification through an analysis of "stock issues." Focusing upon debate as a deliberative analysis, Lee Hultzen, in "Status in Deliberative Analysis," provided the basis for the identification four stock issues--ill, blame, cure, and cost.[4]

The use of the stock issues approach to propositions of policy establishes a problem-solution orientation to an analysis. The issues represent an assumed set of criteria which must be resolved in the affirmative to justify the adoption of a proposition of policy. Failure to affirm any criterion would represent an inadequate discharge on the part of the advocate proposing the change.

Typical among the application of the stock issues analysis to Affirmative responsibilities is the work of McBurney and Mills. They identify the following as areas in which the Affirmative should be prepared:

> (1) show that evils or problems exist, (2) show that these evils are produced by causes that can be remedied, (3) show that the action or policy proposed provides a remedy, and (4) show that the remedy is practicable in terms of cost, new problems it might create, and other possible remedies.[5]

The focus of the third stock issue provides the basis for the Affirmative responsibility to demonstrate the effectiveness of its plan. The identification of some problem or advantage which warrants concern is insufficient of itself to justify a decision in favor of change. Others who have written on the requirements of the advocate of change have concurred with the interpretation of McBurney and Mills. Eubank, for example, indicates that "(i)t is not sufficient for the affirmative to show evils in the present system. The affirmative must prove, not assert, not declare,

that the proposed plan corrects the alleged evil."[6]

Ehninger and Brockriede note that "(o)ne may agree that serious problems exist, cause harm, and are inherent in the present policy, and yet reject the proposition because it does not supply a satisfactory remedy."[7] Failure to supply this remedy is grounds for the rejection of the proposition as was noted more recently by Ziegelmueller and Dause. "Even if it can be demonstrated that a significant ill exists which is causally related to inherent features of the existing policies, a course of action which fails to guarantee a solution to the problem is not likely to be adopted."[8]

The consensus on the requirements of a stock issues analysis points to an explicit obligation on the part of the Affirmative to prove that the plan does, in fact, remedy the problem. Failure to demonstrate that the plan does solve the problem represents an inadequate discharge by the Affirmative team to resolve the stock issues in its favor. The result is the loss of the proposition for that round. While a motive for change may be established as a necessary condition, it is an insufficient condition to warrant the particular change called for through the implementation of the resolution.

Brock, Chesebro, Cragan, and Klumpp identify the motive of the stock issues analysis as one of "deficit motivation"--when the warrant for action is established only after the demonstration of some felt need.[9] In its place they offer the application of systems analysis applied to public policy decision-making. They define an assumption of a process reality where change is continual and motive for behavior adapts to change. Anticipation changes within the system and adaptation to these changes represents

the basis for action. In place of the stock issues of ill, blame, cure, and cost; systems analysis substitutes the use of components, relationships, goals and effects.[10]

The components and relationships of a system are combined to form a description. An analyst describes the relevant parts (components) of a system through their interaction (relationships) with each other. An evaluative assessment of the system is made by determining the adequacy of the system (effects) to meet stipulated goals. While motive for change can be provided by a deficiency in the effects to meet a stipulated goal, the motive is often based upon a comparative assessment of policies to meet a goal. A system which is adequate under one set of stipulations, when compared to another policy, may find itself inadequate when assessed under a different set of goals.

To assess the effects of a system, the advocate must either describe the system's operation as it exists, or predict the system's effects as it is expected to exist. Brock et al., are quite clear in defining this responsibility as one belonging to the advocate proposing the policy:

> . . . (A) systemic analysis of a debate resolution requires that the affirmative be able to predict what newly created multiple effects a resolution introduces into the on-going present system. It is an affirmative obligation to predict what new components, relationships, effects, and goals are created by introducing the solution into the present system. The word predict clearly implies that the affirmative be able to trace and describe the new set of changes produced by the resolution. . .[11]

Lichtman and Rohrer similarly acknowledge a prediction requirement exists with the advocate of a policy. When policy systems are compared, "Decision theory stipulates that the net benefits of any policy system are a function of both the probability that the system will achieve results

and the value placed upon those results."[12] Here, the value placed on the results tells us whether they are desirable, and the probability tells us whether they are likely to occur.

As with stock issues, the policy systems perspective appears to achieve consensus in its requirement that an advocate predict the effects of his/her policy. Without the comparative assessment of the competing policies, one does not have a basis to assume the superiority of the proposed policy. In the absence of predicting the effects of the proposal, the policy comparison is incomplete and the proposition is rejected.

The third perspective of debate to be examined is identified as hypothesis-testing.[13] This perspective views itself as the rhetorical counterpart to the scientific hypothesis. The debate resolution, as a hypothesis, is tested by placing presumption against it and allowing the most rigorous challenges available to be made against it. The ability of the proposition to withstand the successive challenges establishes the probable truth of the proposition. This "truth" is not posited as an immutable standard, but only as a reasonable one established through its ability to withstand all known challenges.[14]

The perspective of viewing a debate proposition as a hypothesis to be tested in the round establishes a high standard for predicting the effects of the proposition. Each of the terms of the proposition needs to withstand the challenge of justification. Any part of the proposition which cannot be justified might warrant the justification of an alternate hypothesis, but not the particular hypothesis submitted by the Affirmative. The specific test is addressed to the proposition, and not more generally

against change. Presumption is refocused as standing in opposition to the particular proposition being tested.[15]

Acceptance of the proposition being tested only occurs upon the justification of the terms of the proposition as all outstanding tests are rejected. Bill Henderson applied this standard to decision behavior by the judge in a paper entitled, "Debate as a Paradigm for Demonstrating Truth." "The judge regards the data provided him as the means to test the truth of the proposition. To the extent that the data leads him to accept the risks inherent in the proposition, he votes affirmative. If the data does not lead him to accept the risks, he votes negative."[16]

The "risk inherent in the proposition" needs to be overcome to warrant a vote for the Affirmative. With the assignment of presumption against the specific hypothesis to be tested, the absence of an affirmation of effect serves as the basis for the rejection of the proposition.

A problem of sorts arises from the distinction Zarefsky makes between the proposition and the plan. Zarefsky identified one of the implications of the hypothesis-testing paradigm as placing increased importance on the wording of the resolution and a decreased importance upon the wording of the plan to implement resolution.[17] The thesis of this position is that the plan functions "to illustrate the principles embodied in the proposition, thereby focusing the arguments upon those principles. . . . Should some difficulty be discovered in one of the plan's peripheral features, the plan could be amended, so long as the amended version still embodied the principles implicit in the proposition."[18]

With the emphasis upon the wording of the proposition, does the obligation of the Affirmative to predict the consequences of the proposition

become diminished? In the opinion of this student, the Affirmative obligation remains. While an increased emphasis upon the wording of the resolution may appear to offer the prospect of focusing argument on the principles underlying a proposition, the principles take on meaning in a policy proposition only as they are manifest in particular actions. Principles, as abstractions, are meaningful by the effects which are associated with them. The theoretic superiority of a proposition to its alternatives is manifest through some empirically measurable results.

When one begins to de-emphasize the particular means by which a proposition is to be implemented, the relationship between the principles assumed within the resolution and the predictability of effects related to the particulars of the plan becomes diminished. While the implementation of the resolution as embodied through one particular plan may result in effects which withstand the tests directed against the resolution, an alternative plan may result in failure.

For example, in a case where an advocate argued that a Federal program of comprehensive medical care should be available to all U.S. citizens, it makes a difference whether one defines the program as one of catastrophic coverage or as one designed to cover all medical maladies. The proposition takes on meaning through the definition of its own terms, or what in the scientific hypothesis would be determined through the way the hypothesis is "operationalized."[19]

In some cases the wording of the resolution may be such that the plan and the resolution are operationally the same, and the plan becomes little more than a restatement of the of the resolution.[20] Of course, as long as

any definitional ambiguity remains as to the meaning of the resolution, it is necessary to define the proposition. The embodiment of the proposition through the plan provides this operational definition. The principles of the proposition are given meaning through the plan. The plan, hence, serves to define what the proposition means. The proposition,as it is understood, is the hypothesis to be tested, and while other meanings of the hypothesis might pass the test, the specific understanding of the hypothesis to a given round is the one which must be affirmed.

The requirement that an Affirmative be able to predict the consequences of its plan appears to be rooted in all three perspectives. The stock issues perspective requires the plan to predict a solution to the problem the Affirmative establishes. The policy systems perspective requires the plan to predict how the system will adapt to change. By comparing the predicted effects of a policy system with an alternative system, the "best" policy is selected. Finally, the hypothesis-tester requires the ability of the proposition to withstand all challenges. The failure of the proposition to justify itself against alternative hypotheses is a failure of the proposition to affirm its probable truth; ie., to predict its interpretation as superior to alternative hypotheses.

When one moves to the practical application of a requirement that an Affirmative demonstrate the consequences of its plan, the standards for resolving arguments become dependent on the development of issues in the round. What is necessary for an Affirmative to claim it has adequately discharged its responsibility to demonstrate the solvency of its plan? It is argued, as a practical standard, that solvency is demonstrated as the cor-

respondence between an Affirmative's inherency and the mechanisms provided in the plan. The greater the complexity of relationships alleged as the inherency to the case, the greater the Affirmative responsibility to prove the mechanisms of the plan address the inherency.

Inherency is understood using the definition provided by Cherwitz and Hikins as "the aggregate or sum total of antecedent causes which operate to block the solution of particular policy dysfunctions."[21] That is, the total number of elements which keep one from solving what is wrong with a given policy. In the development of its case analysis, an Affirmative identifies specific inherency claims. "(S)pecific inherency claims purport to identify and label one or more antecedent conditions as causes effectively operating to block the status quo from ameliorating a problem or set of problems."[22] This view of inherency is multidimensional which views the essential characteristic of inherency as one of causality.

> Central to the multidimensional view of inherency is the notion that one can isolate certain conditions which preclude the status quo from solving the problem advanced by the affirmative advocates. It will be fruitful to consider those conditions analogous to the properties of causal antecedents, that is, to treat inherency itself as essentially causal in nature.[23]

If the nature of inherency is causal--those elements of the system which keep it from realizing some benefit or solving some problem--, then any remedy to the case inherency has to address itself to dealing with the specific causes. For an Affirmative to prove that the causes have been ameliorated, it must demonstrate that the elements proposed through its plan are sufficient to address the particular causes.

In the problem-solution approach often found in stock issues analysis, the relationship of solvency to cause was simple and straightforward. As Ziegelmueller and Dause explained, "a course of action which fails to solve the problem of existing social policies provides no solution at all. The action proposed must be matched precisely to the ill and the blame analysis."[24]

While not a necessary characteristic of the stock issue approach, a traditional view of causality as practiced through this case approach usually limited itself in its consideration of causal variables. Klumpp et al., claim that this traditional view usually narrowed to a "focusing on one or two causal factors that are then removed by the proposition."[25] With a limited number of causal elements present, the Affirmative's demonstration of solvency might be simply inferred. A single cause prevents a given effect from occuring. Removal of the cause allows the effect. Demonstration of solvency operates at a simple, inferential level.

When the level of complexity of causal factors exceeds this simple level, however, what becomes the basis for predicting the solvency of the plan? At progressively complex levels of organization and association, prediction becomes increasingly dependent upon models to account for multiple relationships. Confidence in the relationship between plan mechanisms and their ability to ameliorate inherency effects becomes subject to increasing levels of proof.

The contention that increasing the description of components and relationships results in an increased complexity of analysis is borne out primarily by the systems theorists. Four implications of causality were assessed by Klumpp et al., in relation to a systems model:[26]

1) MULTIPLE CAUSATION--The first implication is that many factors occuring simultaneously contribute to the generation and maintenance of a problem. The effect of multiple causes may create a system where "it may not even be possible for an Affirmative to determine which single factor accounts for a system's operation. Indeed, inherency is . . . the result of multiple interactions stemming from the principle of functional design."[27]

2) MULTIPLE POLICY ALTERNATIVES--It may be possible for several alternative courses of action to reach the same final state.[28] "(T)he alternative need not directly affect the crisis relationship, but may reach it indirectly. . . . (A) number of alternatives are possible methods of changing relationships."[29]

3) MULTIPLE EFFECTS--The total effect of each potential alternative must be compared to each other. Because components in the system are interconnected and controlled by each other, "(c)hanges in one relationship in a system will spread changes throughout the system. The relationships more immediate to the change will be altered more than the remote ones, but most relationships will be affected in some way."[30]

4) INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF PROBABILITY--The probability of antecedent effects becomes emphasized. The Affirmative bears the responsibility for accounting for the consequences of the new components that have been introduced into the system and the effects they have on existing components and relationships. The uncertainties of the system as amended must be accounted for and the ramifications to future conditions described. "The affirmative must prove that certain conditions probably will exist in the future."[31]

Given these four implications, the Affirmative ability to demonstrate the corresponsdence between plan mechanisms and inherency effects become subject to a much more stringent proof requirement than the simple inference

associated with a single cause. Introduction of otherwise unknown components into the on-going system has a limited basis from which to predict its effects. If an Affirmative introduces a radical interpretation to the resolution, they may further remove their plan from a predictive model as well as mitigate the use of expert testimony to predict and explain the consequences of the plan.[32]

It may appear that the stringent application of a standard of judging which requires the Affirmative to predict the consequences of its plan reduces the latitude of case analysis. This is not a necessary consequent of such a requirement. While some might be inclined to move in the direction of simplifying case analysis to more easily predict consequences, the use of a stingent judging standard of solvency re-aligns the balance of responsibility between the Affirmative and Negative team.

If the inability of the status quo to rectify a problem is the result of a sophisticated and multi-dimensional analysis of causes which keeps the present system from operating in the optimal manner, then the same multi-dimensional standards become the criteria to be applied to any alternative attempt to allege solvency.[33] As Zarefsky noted, a pro-affirmative bias exists in a double-standard when "comparing one system as it exists at one point in time with another as a theoretical ideal."[34] Requiring the affirmative to account for the same inherencies which contribute to status quo dysfunctions is the only standard which compares policies using a single standard of assessment. The theoretic requirement for an advocate to predict the consequences of his/her proposition is best measured in practice by the correspondence between inherency dysfunctions which preclude status quo action with plan mechanisms which are correlated addressing these dysfunctions. Hopefully, this requirement will allow us all to play the game a little more soundly.

Endnotes

[1]M. Jack Parker, "How to Play a Game Which Has No Rules," Journal of Illinois Speech & Theatre Association, XXXII (1978), pp. 44-48.

[2]"How to Play a Game Which Has No Rules," p. 48.

[3]Several other perspectives could be identified. John D. Cross and Ronald J. Matlon, "An Analysis of Judging Philosophies in Academic Debate," Journal of the American Forensic Association, XV (Fall 1978), pp. 110-123, for example, identify three additional perspectives; the "Tabula Rasa" judge, the "Evaluator of Argumentative Skills" judge, and the "Judicial System" judge. The Tabula Rasa perspective describes a person who is "Totally open to any theory of how debate should be judged." As such, this model describes an openness to other decision-making models, but does not organize a discrete model of decision-making, per se. The Evaluator of Argumentative Skills appears to make an evaluative judgment of the debate process, rather than view the debate as resulting in a product. As such, it also appears to depend on one of the other decision-making models to organize the arguments. The Judicial System was not idenfified by any distinct characteristics and was summarily described as having many of the characteristics of a policy systems perspective.

[4]Lee Hultzen, "Status in Deliberative Analysis," in The Rhetorical Idiom, ed. Donald C. Bryant (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1958), pp. 97-123.

[5]James H. McBurney and Glen E. Mills, Argumentation and Debate: Techniques of a Free Society, 2nd ed. (New York: McMillan, 1964), p. 50.

[6]Wayne C. Eubank, "Developing the Case," in Argumentation and Debate: Principles and Practices (Revised Ed.), ed. James H. McBath (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), p. 111.

[7]Douglas Ehninger and Wayne Brockriede, Decision by Debate (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1963), p. 226.

[8]George Ziegelmueller and Charles Dause, Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 36.

[9]Bernard L. Brock, James W. Chesebro, John F. Cragan, and James F. Klumpp, Public Policy Decision-Making: Systems Analysis and Comparative Advantages Debate (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 149-150.

[10]Public Policy Decision-Making, Chap. 2.

[11]Public Policy Decision-Making, p. 98.

[12]Allan Lichtman and Daniel Rohrer, "A General Theory of the Counterplan," Journal of the American Forensic Association, XII (Fall 1975), p. 73. Note: The implementation of a counterplan, from a systems perspective, is comparable to the implementation of an Affirmative plan. The requirement to predict the likelihood of the effects remains with the advocate of the system, whether Affirmative or Negative.

[13]The description of hypothesis-testing dates to a paper presented by David Zarefsky, "A Reformulation of the Concept of Presumption," presented to the Central States Speech Association Convention, April 7, 1972.

[14]David Zarefsky, "Argument as Hypothesis-Testing," Paper presented to the Speech Communication Association Convention, December 28, 1976, pp. 1-6.

[15]See David Zarefsky, "Changing Concepts in Forensics," Paper presented to the Speech Communication Association Convention, December 1974, p. 5; in addition to "A Reformulation of the Concept of Presumption," p. 9; and "Argument as Hypothesis-Testing," pp. 6-7.

[16]Bill Henderson, "Debate as a Paradigm for Demonstrating Truth," Paper presented to the Speech Communication Association Convention, December 1974, p. 6.

[17]"Argument as Hypothesis-Testing," pp. 6-7.

[18]"Argument as Hypothesis-Testing," p. 7.

[19]Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1973), pp. 18-26.

[20]"Argument as Hypothesis-Testing," pp. 6-7. In addition see Arthur N. Kruger, Modern Debate: Its Logic and Strategy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 64. Kruger argues for a similar position to Zarefsky noting, "Occasionally, the policy itself may almost be the plan."

[21]Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins, "Inherency as a Multidimensional Construct: A Rhetorical Approach to a Proof of Causation," Paper presented to the Speech Communication Association Convention, December 1977, p. 1. A similar version of the paper under the same title appears in the Journal of the American Forensic Association, XIV (Fall 1977), pp. 82-90.

[22]"Inherency as a Multidimensional Construct," p. 4.

[23]"Inherency as a Multidimensional Construct," p. 4.

[24]Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy, pp. 36-37.

[25]James F. Klumpp, Bernard L. Brock, James W. Chesebro, & John F. Cragan, "Implications of a Systems Model," Journal of the American Forensics Association, XI (Summer 1974), pp. 3-4.

[26]"Implications of a Systems Model," pp. 4-5. The four implications follow the organization provided by the authors.

[27]Public Policy Decision-Making, p. 109.

[28]Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "General Systems Theory," General Systems Theory and Human Communication, ed. Brent D. Ruben & John Y. Kim, (New York: Hayden, 1975), pp. 10-14. Bertalanffy describes this state as "Equifinality," which is "where the same final state may be reached from different initial conditions and in different ways."

[29]Public Policy Decision-Making, p. 75.

[30]Public Policy Decision-Making, p. 76.

[31]Public Policy Decision-Making, p. 104.

[32]Public Policy Decision-Making, pp. 98-101.

[33]"Inherency as a Multidimensional Construct," p. 18.

[34]"Changing Concepts in Forensics," p. 2.